

Combat & Healing

**Get In Touch With Your
Reptile Brain**

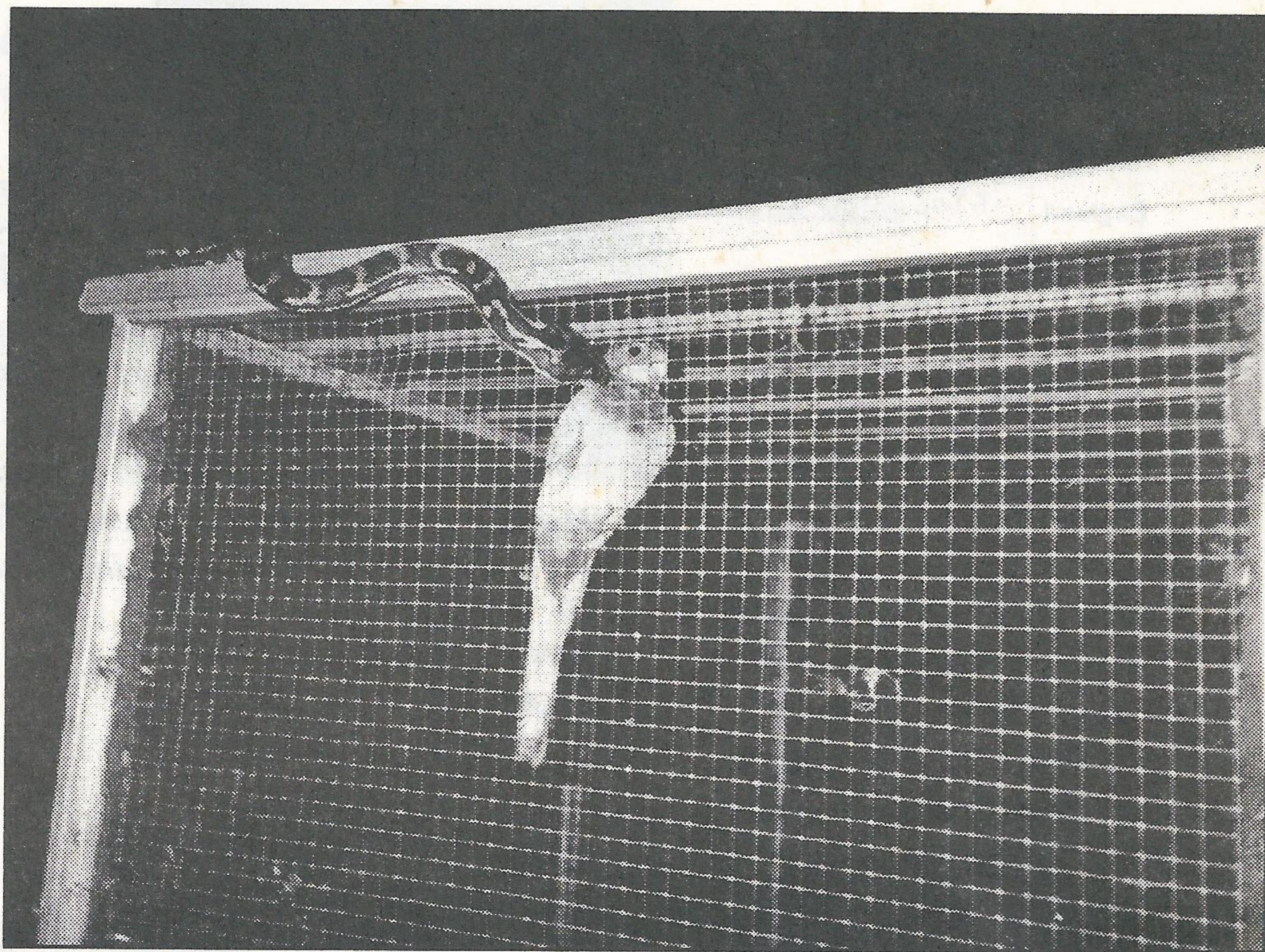
The Power of Taiji

A Culture of Violence

**Long and Short Term
Strategy**

Mobility vs. Stability

Practice makes Perfect



PLUS

**WTBA News, New Videos
etc.**

COMBAT & HEALING

The Magazine of the World Taiji Boxing Association

March 1999

EDITOR

Bramsneed Blurnog

ART DIRECTOR

Ben, Eli & Kataleenas Montaigne

INSPIRATION

Sandra Montaigne

USA

Al Krych

Canada

Josephine Anderson

England

Peter Smith

Spain

Ken Johnson

WTBA Secretary

Mause Eaglen

FRONT COVER

So Close & yet So Far! Demonstrating the Taiji principle of the soft overcoming the hard! Taken in our back yard 3 metres from the house at night.

CONTENTS

Page 1

Get In Touch With Your Reptile Brain:

By Erle Montaigne (Gwandanaland)

Page 6

The Power of Taiji

By Christian Fox, (England)

Page 8

A Culture of Violence

Matt Delany, Manchester, (England)

Page 11

Long and Short Term Strategies

By Tony Court (Wales UK)

Page 15

Mobility V Stability

By Mike Babin (Canada)

Page 17

Practice Makes Perfect

By Marc Seguin (Canada)

Combat & Healing is independently owned and published for the international martial arts community, distributed worldwide. Opinions and views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the owners or editor. In the interest of fair play in the martial arts community will be given a fair go. Articles go in to this magazine unedited apart from obvious spelling and grammatical and illegal items etc.

POSTAL ADDRESS:

POB 792

Murwillumbah NSW 2484

Australia

+61-(0) 2 6679 7145

Fax: +61- (0) 2 6679 7028

E-mail: taiji@ozemail.com.au

<http://www.ozemail.com.au/~taiji>

Reproduction of any material without prior permission is strictly prohibited. All material remains under copyright to the publisher, MTG Publishing.

First Line Marketing & Writing

Based in Germany, this company has introduced a new Taijiquan Magazine to South Africa.

It sounds good enough for non-South Africans to take a look at.

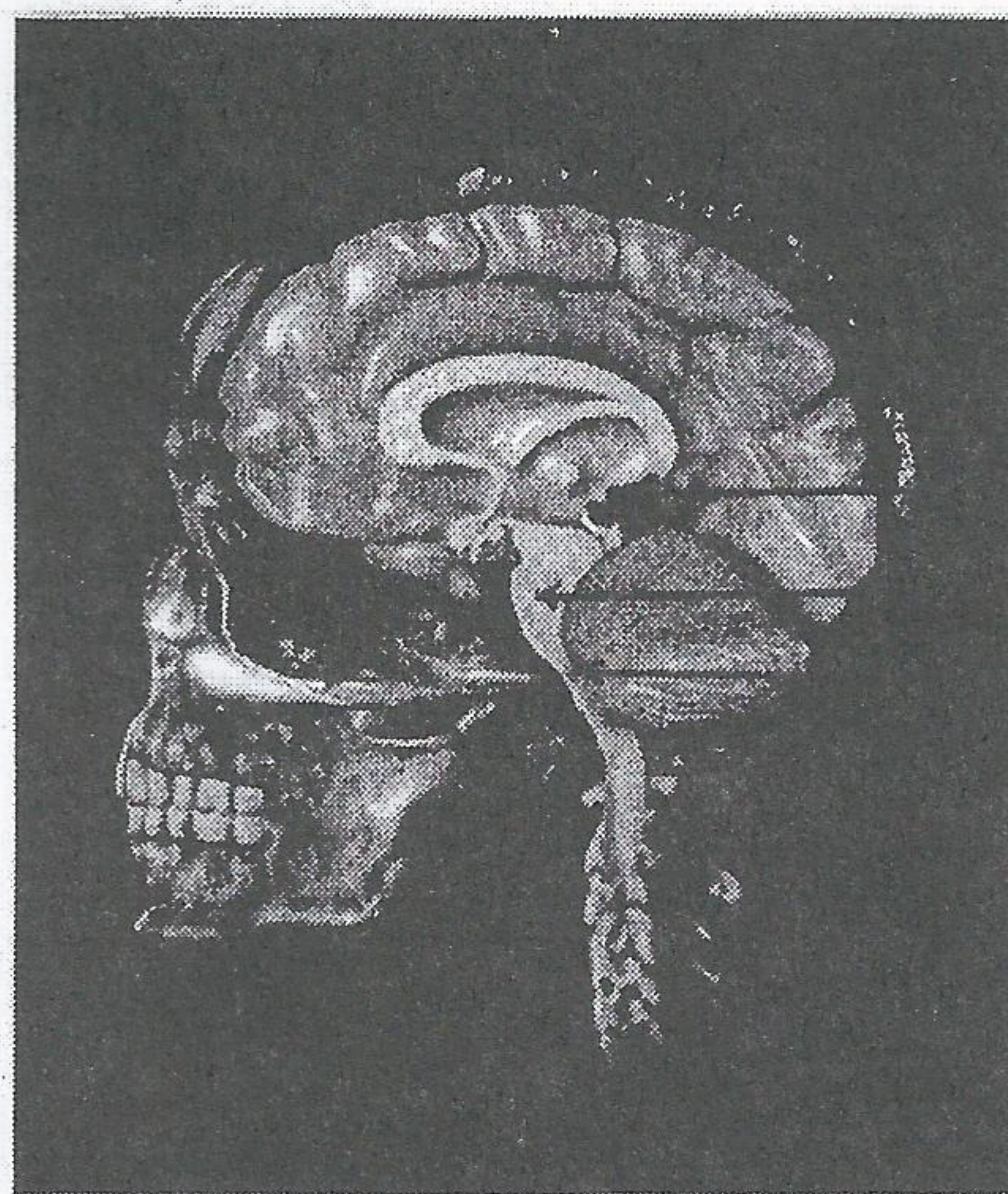
Called "The Internal Ways" you can contact them in GERMANY (Yes Germany) at: 031 465 6424 or Fax: 031 465 6378.

E-mail: firstline@mweb.co.za

Getting in Touch with your Reptile Brain

Erle Montague

The brainstem (Diagram No. 1) is the portion of the brain comprising the medulla oblongata, the pons, and the mesencephalon (midbrain). It performs motor, sensory and reflex functions and contains the corticospinal and the reticulospinal tracts. The 12 pairs of cranial nerves from the brain arise mostly from the brainstem.



now being recognized by the wider scientific community. It even has an area of the whole brain allocated to it. The reptile brain is actually the 'brain stem' that area of the base of the skull that holds so much significance to us in the internal martial arts.

The **pons** is located in the brainstem, vertically be-

To break it down into its individual components we also see that they are widely used in sensory stuff.

When I introduced the concept of the Reptile Brain to the martial arts community many years ago, many were enthralled, many were skeptical. Once upon a time, the mention of the 'reptile brain' would bring tumultuous laughter from most of the scientific community. Nowadays however, it is a different matter with this area of the brain

tween the midbrain and the medulla oblongata, and sagittally between the cerebellum and the pituitary gland. It is responsible for serving as a bridge ("pons" means "bridge") between the cerebrum, the cerebellum, and the medulla oblongata. By serving as this liaison between the different parts of the brain, the pons is able to facilitate coordination between the functions of the two sides of the body as well as those of the face and jaw. The ori-

gins of the fifth through eighth cervical nerves are associated with the pons.

The **medulla oblongata** is the lowest part of the brainstem and serves as the site of connection between the brain and the spinal cord. Located just above the foramen magnum in the skull and in front of the cerebellum, the medulla oblongata contains a number of nerve centers, which are responsible for controlling involuntary processes such as the heart-beat, breathing, and body temperature regulation. It is only about an inch (2 1/2 centimeters) wide and comprises less than one percent of the weight of the central nervous system. In spite of its small size, though, it is integral in the transmission of nerve impulses between the spinal cord and the higher brain. Many of the nerve fibers that pass through the medulla oblongata cross over, so that many impulses from the right side of the brain control functions on the left side of the body and vice-versa. Thus, any injury or disease in this area is **often fatal**.

The **Mesencephalon** is one of the three parts of the brain stem. It is mostly made up of white matter

with some gray matter. A red nucleus is in the mesencephalon. It contains the ends of nerve fibers from the other parts of the brain. Deep inside the mesencephalon are nuclei of several skull nerves. The mesencephalon also contains nerve nuclei for certain hearing and seeing reflexes. Also called **midbrain**.

The function of the **pineal body**, or gland, within the midbrain is not fully understood. It is generally believed to be a vestigial (no longer used) sensory organ, which is incompletely developed, in the modern anatomy. The term "pineal" means "pine cone shaped."

A note on the above. It is this humble dabbler in medical science that we are able to get back the original function of the Pineal gland, like communication at a much higher level than just speech and communicating with the earth such as dolphins, whales and seal are able to do. We can do this by practicing Qigong and the internal martial arts. Back when science didn't help at all, the ancient Chinese would simply say that when we do Qigong, we get back to normal, or what we should have been had we not been so reliant upon speech, travel, radio waves and television in mod-

ern times. Obviously, when a part of the body is not used, it becomes useless, like a leg muscle that has to be re-trained after a long illness of inactivity. We use our Pineal gland very rarely and on the odd occasion that it does work, we are amazed and call it coincidence or E.S.P. etc. These things should happen all the time but we have little use for real communication skills because it's so easy to pick up a phone or to watch the news on the TV.

"The remaining brainstem and spinal cord constitute a neural chassis that provides most of the neural machinery required for self-preservation and the preservation of the species".

Qigong helps our Pineal to work again by getting in touch with the 'ground' and 'ground Qi'. This is the reason that in all internal martial arts, we are told to do nothing! This does not mean that we do not move or look or hear, but it means that our conscious brain rests while we practice thus giving our so-called extra-sensory organs a chance to reestablish

themselves within our framework. However, it is not that easy of course as it takes much training before we are able to perform movements that are alien to us at a sub-conscious level. Hence the saying that it takes years before one advances in his or her Taijiquan training. It only takes a short time to learn the basic movements of Taijiquan. However, they are only that, movement! We must take these movements to a much higher level, a sub-conscious level so that they become like everyday things, like breathing or our heartbeat, they must be THAT automatic.

The reptile brain is that brain, part of the 'Triune Brain' that we use for survival; it is our oldest brain with the 'Paleomammalian Brain' (known as the "Limbic System" since 1952) being next and the youngest brain is called the 'Neomammalian Brain'. All reptiles have the Reptile Brain, all mammals have the Paleomammalian Brain plus the Reptile Brain but it is only the higher Mammals such as humans that have all three brains.

Paul D Maclean in his exemplary work on the "Triune Brain" says of the Reptile Brain: "The remaining brainstem and spinal cord constitute a neural chassis that provides most of the neural

machinery required for self-preservation and the preservation of the species".

The Reptile brain is where all of our ancient memory is stored, things like past lives, who we were and who we are, what we did and what happened to us, it's all there for us to tap into if we wish to. Why would we want to do this? It is many people's belief that stuff that happened to us in previous lives shows up on our current physical body. Like a birthmark that could possibly be linked back to when a previous incarnation was flogged for stealing a loaf of bread?

So an internal stylist does not LOOK like a martial artist because he or she does not have to! We can be totally happy in knowing that that instinctive survival mode will kick in at the right time.

So if we can get in touch with that memory that is causing the birthmark, then this is the first step in releasing the anguish caused by that ancient memory. The birthmark will not go away of course (many however believe that even this will disappear); however, the pain caused to our

sub-conscious mind will be taken away from our knowing why. And any modern physical or emotional damage is usually easily fixed by allowing the patient to see why they are in such a mental state.

When a child is born it has to rely solely upon instinct and sensory stuff and reflexes. The child has no way of learning what is right or wrong. So it is little help to slap a child or chastise it in any way until it's next brain comes into play so that is able to learn. When a child is slapped while still in the reptile brain mode, its only recourse is to go into survival mode (reptile brain mode) and as it cannot fight back, only cries! So how stupid is it to slap a child or to shake it to teach it a lesson when it has no way of learning!

Science now tells us that the reptile brain is that part that is in charge of these things. A child for instance knows nothing about the fact that if it fell off a table it would hurt itself, but if this happens, it will make an attempt to grab or in many cases it will not venture past the edge of the table. Why, because the reptile brain is looking after it.

Normally, there is no need to access the reptile brain in normal life. However, in order to learn properly the internal martial arts we must have ac-

cess to this brain. It causes us to stand out from the so-called hard styles, as there is no mention of the reptile brain in any hard style that I know of. Hard styles are 'hard', they cause someone to be continually on the lookout for danger, and this is because hard styles are purely physical with little or no internal aspect. In the internal arts, we are taught that we are normal people, artists, writers, poets, schoolteachers, mechanics, mild mannered reporters etc. And we do not have to be tense and aware of an attack at any time! If an attack does happen our reptile brain kicks in and we are into survival mode becoming a raging animal fighting for our lives, with our physical conscious brain totally unaware of what is happening. We have of course done the training to cause our body to react with the correct movements but these have been done so much that they are now reflex actions that work independently from the conscious brain.

So an internal stylist does not LOOK like a martial artist because he or she does not have to! We can be totally happy in knowing that that instinctive survival mode will kick in at the right time taking care of business and not allowing our artistic brain to be affected by this confrontation. To this end, the internal martial arts of Taijiquan, Bagwazhang and

Xing-I Ch'uan have all been developed to cause the body to move in a self-defense manner automatically and reflexively.

Western science now accepts that we have a reptile brain, so much so that the rule in judging whether or not someone is clinically dead is to find out if the reptile brain is still functioning by sending out electrical waves. If it is not, then the person is dead!

Qigong & The Reptile Brain

The region of the reptile brain (brainstem) is one of the most important areas for Qigong and Dim-mak. In Qigong it is used to help us to go into the reptile brain where we are in survival or reflex mode allowing the body heal itself or to help us to heal others. There is a good ruler as to whether or not you are doing your Qigong correctly and it has to do with the Reptile Brain. When we are taught the basic standing Qigong, we usually begin by getting used to all of the new physical things that we are faced with and are feeling. Like the shakes that accompany the stances. Once over this area and we are faced with a mild vibration which is quite pleasant, we feel the Qi 'lifting up' the back and being activated at the points known as

GB 20 (gallbladder points No. 20) just below the base of the skull. We feel something lifting up and ending at these points, like a sensation.

Everyone's sensation is different so it is difficult for me to tell you what to feel, better for you to feel it yourself. But be warned, you MUST do Qigong correctly and that means that every tiny peripheral is in its correct place, the weight is placed exactly in the correct place, the head is held exactly correctly, the breathing is being performed exactly and so on. I recently heard from a chap who had been doing so-called Qigong with some 'master'. He complained that he felt ill after every session and his mind was scattered afterwards. So I sent him my Basic Qigong tape so that he could see exactly what he was doing wrong. He discovered that just about everything he was doing was wrong and thus having a detrimental effect rather than a healing effect! The worst thing that most people do when learning Qigong is to place the weight over the balls of their feet right onto Kidney One point. This is the most damaging thing that one can do as it causes 'adverse cyclic Qi' to be generated which can damage the reptile brain! Not many 'masters' realize that KD 1 point is NOT the activation point for KD 1 but rather that it is the

area of the heels that activates KD 1 point on the foot, the energy input point for ground Qi. So when we place weight onto KD 1 point, it actually stops the Qi from entering into the body. However, if the ground Qi did not enter the body we would die so it must come in some how. So, it builds up to such a degree that it comes through in violent bursts, which reach right up, into the reptile brain damaging it! This is the reason that many people experience violent shakes and body movement while standing in a basic Qigong stance. Many 'masters' say that this is powerful, but they are wrong. The weight must be placed upon the heels thus leaving KD 1 point free of all tension and allowing a moderate and balanced flow of Qi to enter the body gradually, thus enhancing the reptile brain.

We are always told to 'sink the Qi'. But why? The reason is that only in this way does the Qi turn into 'jing', a more purified and evaporated type of Qi which is then able to flow to all parts of the body, condenses and settles into the marrow as fat enabling our body to produce more 'T' cells for our immune system. In 'sinking' we allow the 'activation points' for the Reptile Brain to work, activating the Reptile Brain. The very instant that you begin to discover 'sinking' or as the

Chinese call it, 'Sung', you will feel the reptile brain come into play. For a short time, you feel invincible but do not worry that will go away, leaving you with a feeling of well-being because in this condition, your body is free to do what it has to without external tension and the Reptile Brain is free to help you to survive. Survival does not only mean survival against physical attack, but also against disease and pathogenic attack. Tension is one of the greatest things that affects the well being of the Reptile Brain so Qigong is able to help the Reptile Brain do its subconscious work unhindered by tension. All of your glands will be able to do their allotted work. Your Thymus gland, which is in charge of balancing the Qi, will not shrivel up as it does in most people at age around 15.

The Thymus gland is more susceptible to stress than any other gland. When we are younger and have not much adult stresses placed upon us, this gland is large and healthy, a tuber shape reaching down from CV 22. So when we begin to get rid of stress, this gland comes back again to control our flow of Qi again. By becoming aware of the Reptile Brain we also activate and assist the Pineal gland, which is also responsible for our perception of nature and the things around us and our place

on the planet. So it is not unusual for this gland to increase in size. There are some animals whose size of this gland is half the size of their total brain at birth enabling them to be totally aware of their environment from day one and be in total survival mode.

So while many people do Qigong simply to become more relaxed, they do not know that this 'simple' exercise is one of the most beneficial that anyone can do to enhance the Reptile Brain, hence enhancing the workings of the whole body.

Dim-Mak & The Reptile Brain

In the Dim-Mak area we strike more to the brainstem than to any other area other than to the front of the neck and the front of the neck is simply another way of getting to the reptile brain area. Deadly points such as GB 20, GB 12, GV 15 and 16 are all in the area of the reptile brain. When the reptile brain is kinked by either jerking the head forward violently or by striking it, the person's conscious brain shuts down causing knock out as the other two brains cannot function if the reptile brain is not working properly.

The Power of Taiji

by Christian Fox, England.

When I say 'The Power of Taiji' I do not just mean the power that is generated by doing the form work, Fa-jing training and so on. I refer to the power of Taiji with regards to the influence that it has on the broader scheme of things.

The years as a teenager were particularly turbulent and I experienced a lot of negativity directed towards me.

As a result I became angry with those that would show me hate and pettiness and learnt to hate them back.

As a result I became angry with those that would show me hate and pettiness and learnt to hate them back. This was not natural for me, but it was the only way that I could cope with what was happening around me. As a result I took up martial arts in an attempt to prevent some events from happening again. Over a period of six to eight years I floated from style to style.

I met and learnt from people that were very skilled in their chosen field whether it was in a dojo or back garden. All the time, in the back of my mind, were memories that haunted me, so to block them out I

trained to extreme limits and adopted the beliefs of the people who taught me. One day though I just stopped. In my mind had flashed the thought that something was not right, something was missing! There then followed a period where I was not satisfied with what I was doing.

Taking stock of all my acquired skills I found that the memories were still there, the hate was still there and I felt no more confident in my ability to defend myself than before.

After searching for a while I was reminded about Taiji. I had previously learnt a Taiji form but this was a very diluted version and soon left after realizing that the instructor did not really know any more than we did.

However, bits of what I had learnt had always stayed with me. So I took the time to learn Taiji again. This time I learnt the Yang Cheng-fu and Yang Lu-ch'an styles, along with Qigong, fighting techniques and San-Sau.

Gradually changes began to take place, not only in my ability to perform Taiji, but also in my life. The benefits that have been bestowed upon me are many. In myself I feel more relaxed externally, yet internally I am sharper and

more alert than ever. I have begun to view events and situations from a different angle, taking in the whole situation and not just those presented before me. The fear has gone and when I go somewhere it is as if a golden light is filling the place. I have also begun to know a love for life that I never knew before.

Despite feeling like this I still realize that the old dangers of before are still present, yet becoming involved in them has virtually disappeared. On the three occasions when I have had to protect myself since my renaissance it has been quick, effective and prevented an escalation of the situation. My health has also taken an up turn. Having learnt the differences between being healthy and fit I have stopped taking the multi-vitamins and minerals, the sports drinks and foods.

Not only has this saved me money but as a teacher who is exposed to lots of ill children, who have a surprisingly wide range of ailments, it has saved me money on prescriptions too. Whilst the other members of the staff and school are laid up with illness after illness, it takes something very dynamic to affect me now. This is excellent as I was prone to the slightest of colds before. The other benefit has been with my knees. After suffering

from damaged knees with nothing curing them, it has been a relief and joy after nine years to not feel the daily pain and to know that I am now capable of performing quite demanding actions.

In conclusion, enough events and situations have happened to me that would make it hard for me to believe in any other way. This is especially so as I prefer to experience things rather than just hear about and accept them. However, I also realize that to receive I must give and make sacrifices- Yin and Yang. By understanding that the world is both beautiful and dangerous, as the ancient ones must have, I now feel more prepared for this life.

This does not mean that I look at life through rose colored spectacles, it does mean though that I can see things in perspective. Therefore, I do believe in the quiet, deep, all encompassing Power of Taijiquan.

New Videos From MTG

MTG182

The Reptile Brain Volume Two. Plus, Training Basics Volume Two.

On this tape, Erle Montague shows more about getting in touch with your 'survival brain, or *reptile brain*. Methods of accessing this hidden power center are shown. Also on this tape, the continuing series of "Training Basics". Some of the best methods to gain all of the essentials for fighting and self-defense as well as some deadly fighting techniques.

MTG183

Da-Lu (The Great Repulse) Volume Two.

On this volume in the series (the last), Erle concentrates upon how to change direction plus two major attacking movements with their defenses against them. This is a wonderful exercise to learn how to fight by learning how to move.

MTG 163.

Qi Disruption form number 9 is now available to everyone.

A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE?

By Matt Delaney:
(Manchester)

From my experience of life growing up and living in the urban Britain an 'accepted' culture of street fighting exists that is linked to nightlife.

The problems of a dense population in a large urban area of Greater Manchester (more than 150 squared miles of urban sprawl), is a major contributory factor. While out for a Drink in pubs and night clubs, there is a thin veneer which can erupt at any time into major pub brawls or street fights, I have been involved in and witnessed many incidents, sadly it is fairly common to see a fight when out for a beer.

Alcohol and the male ego are an explosive combination, it's the alcohol that makes people let go of their inhibitions, and numbs the pain of punches. Of the many incidents I have witnessed, a lot of the fighters are very innovative and unpredictable, with a very good reaction time. Which leads me to conclude that the fighters are not drunk, because of this I have asked people I know who enjoy fighting if the alcohol inhibits their ability. I was told that if they get very drunk they will not start a fight because they know they would lose. The acceptance of violent behavior as being normal is because people who go drinking

at weekends are so used to it as practically part of working class culture, the author of "The Sett" and "The Feather Men," Ralph Fiennes an ex SAS officer once observed, how pub brawls are almost a sport in the North of England!

The violence that surrounds us is progressively becoming worse. Many night clubs in the center of Manchester search customers physically and/or with a metal detector to check if they are carrying drugs or a weapon. Recently the trend has extended to one or two large bars, one I entered the doormen ran the detector over me "Surely it isn't getting worse for weapons in pubs these days?" I said. His reply; "it sure is mate, I took this knife off one guy tonight" It looked more like a sword.

I took this knife off one guy tonight" It looked more like a sword.

It appears to be so ingrained into the psyche of the local population that we are virtually desensitized to it. To a large extent the drink/street fight related occurrences are not recognized as an extensive problem, this was emphasized during the 1998 World cup the UK Police were mystified to find the ringleaders of the trouble were not known orga-

nized hooligans, unfortunately what they failed to realize is it is just your average English lad with a skin full of beer. Consider the following Incidents:

Last year the ski wear shop where my sister works as a manageress was raided by half a dozen masked men brandishing machetes and hammers in broad daylight

1) Recently a friend of mine called Brian was out with his girlfriend, as they were walking outside the pub a group of five lads passed then and one made a derogatory sexual comment about his girl friend, Brian reacted to the abuse then turned away and walked down the road, the gang followed them, both Brian and his girlfriend were beaten up, only two weeks later Brian was in an Indian restaurant with a friend called Jay, Jay provoked an abusive group of lads consequently they were attacked this time beer glasses were smashed over Brian's head, he suffered from concussion, Jay got kicked senseless until blood poured from his ears, he was taken to a hospital, thank-

fully with no lasting damage.

2) A lad called Ian was minding his own business having a dance in a night club when a fight erupted behind him, he did not even notice it, the doormen rushed in and grabbed everyone in the immediate area, and threw them out, including Ian, who protested at the fact he was not involved, only to be dragged down an alley by the doormen kicking the crap out of him, and robbing him of his expensive gold chain and petty cash, Ian ended in a hospital with a severely fractured jaw, cheekbone and nose.

3) Last year the ski wear shop where my sister works as a manageress was raided by half a dozen masked men brandishing machetes and hammers in broad daylight, my sister and one of the assistants locked themselves in a room where the cash was kept, the raiders savagely attacked another assistant, smashing his skull.

With regard to Incident No.1 My friends could have easily avoided the situation by not reacting to the abuse, their manhood must have felt threatened and so their reaction was not to 'lose face', ultimately if they are honest with themselves their ego played a large part in the event

that unfolded.

Incident No.2.

In a club the doormen should protect the innocent if fighting breaks out, but realistically you cannot afford to rely on anyone but yourself. Ian later approached the police who were not remotely interested in his predicament, since it would have been his story against their interpretation.

Incident No. 3.

The police had to treat the investigation as attempted murder and eventually caught the perpetrators. The reaction of my sister and the assistant to lock themselves in a room was the most effective measure to mitigate serious attack, if you can run away then you must, if you stay to fight is it due to pride? Are you afraid of being perceived as a coward?

The newspaper "the mail on Sunday" reported how certain types of crime such as robbery, burglary and assault are on the increase in England and Wales more so than in the USA! Thankfully we do not have a gun culture, and our social and criminal problems fade into insignificance when looking at the gun related crime in the USA. A report handed to Jack Straw the Home secretary of the UK

displayed the following figures:

Crimes per 1,000 people or households 1995

ENGLAND & WALES USA

ROBBERY 7.6 5.3

BURGLARY 82.9 47.5

ASSAULTS 20 8.8

Sadly this seems to be the way our society is these days, the will to commit violent acts seems to be part of human nature. Obviously in certain circumstances you can avoid confrontational situations, although there are some who believe that all violent confrontation can be avoided, these people either are naive or have not lived in an area where the darker side of human nature is very apparent.

With regard to using Taiji to defend you I have found some effective training techniques, one of which is through the small san-sau. Your partner throwing the punches, should wear some bag mitts and cover the inside of his forearms with children's football plastic shinpads, you should wear a brain bucket (head guard). He then throws the punches with maximum force and try to knock your head off. It may hurt your palms as you hit the plastic shinpad you may experience a lot of bruising, but it

will condition your palms and forearms. The purpose of this training is to experience full force punches, without the shinpads your partner will not want to hit you with maximum force as he knows the pain he will get from a palm strike to their accupoints, obviously an adrenaline-pumped attacker will not have the same attitude, therefore it makes this method a bit more realistic.

With regard to using Taiji to defend you I have found some effective training techniques, one of which is through the small san-sau.

It also tests your stance and makes you use your waist or the punches will hit their intended target, even if a few punches do connect the brain bucket only stops superficial damage, you will feel the full force of the punch as your brain rattles around, while this may not seem significant it is important for people who have not experienced being struck, since some people may freeze as they are hit, no matter how good your Taiji self defense is, it's unrealistic to think that you will never be punched, street fights are not necessarily one on one, his

mates will want to mash your face as well. This type of training should not be attempted until the student has gained the control not to follow through with the simultaneous strikes to the unprotected dim-mak points on the head neck and torso. (Although there has to be intent and commitment). Eventually your partner should punch randomly therefore out of sequence of the small san-sau, adding to the realism.

Obviously no training method can emulate what will happen in a real fight, although this method does go some way to address your mental reaction to getting hit very hard.

When faced with a real situation in order to survive you must let go both mentally and emotionally, let your aggressive animal instincts take over, you must find the key that opens the lock, certain Taiji training methods help by raising the energy, in response to an attack; "let the body and limbs work themselves out in accordance with the discipline they have undergone" (Bruce Lee). When your martial art becomes a way of life it does increase your ability to defend yourself but more importantly your awareness becomes so much more heightened it helps you to avoid potential conflict.

Long Term Strategy, Short Term Strategy

by Anthony Court

If we intend to develop the martial side of Taiji, it is as well to have some sort of basic plan or programme. In other words, a strategy.

Over many years of training, study and practice, I have found that it is impossible to teach the martial self defence aspect to anyone who has not practised the 'form' for any length of time. Based solely on observation, I came to realize, that, although it is not difficult to teach fighting techniques, cannon fist forms etc., to students, it is virtually impossible for those same students to develop speed, flow and power, without first having spent many hours practising 'form'.

Spending hours 'working out' in a gym, or having a high grade in other martial arts counts for very little. In fact many so called 'fit' people (in the Western sense) are at a distinct disadvantage because of in-built tension, stiffness and an inability to relax.

So our first strategy should be in the practice of 'form'. The 'form' is the key to our foundation without which higher attainment is not possible. From day one of your training, may I humbly suggest you learn the following quote by heart... The quote is from Zen Master Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

"In the beginners mind are infinite possibilities, in the experts mind very few."

Without the correct attitude to training nothing of any significance will be achieved.

Why is our attitude important? Well, it depends what you wish to attain. It's very easy to play the martial art game.... Chasing grades, titles, recognition, reputation etc., all this nonsense can lead us away from the true understanding of the 'internal arts'. So I would in a light hearted way suggest you throw all those certificates, sashes/belts titles (Sifu etc.) fancy outfits and photos in the bin. Or better still give it all away to an animal charity.

If our motivation and approach is not open and honest from day one we will soon come up against our first negative obstacle

If our motivation and approach is not open and honest from day one we will soon come up against our first negative obstacle... and that is self delusion and just behind comes self importance. As Carlos Casteneda quotes in one of his many books 'Self

importance is the monster with three thousand heads'.

By retaining the 'beginners mind' and developing awareness our training has a good chance to progress in the correct manner.



Tony Court Practising Fa-jing

If we are not aware of the true nature of our minds, then we can practice Taiji all our lives and miss the target by as little as an inch.

It's not just a matter of being aware of the teachings, instruction, fellow students or the environment, the most important thing is to be aware of ourselves. Our likes, dislikes, attachments

and any negative attitudes that we harbour.

In fact any time that self-importance raises its head ... cut it off, there and then.

By continuing to watch the mind you will slowly come to be able to control it, otherwise however much you think you have learned, the moment there is a real challenge (not necessarily a physical attack) you could find yourself in deep trouble.

Only by remaining in a state of *natural* stillness will you retain the edge in any situation. This

is a very serious point.

Building up self-importance, self image, status and appearance is a big mistake. Because you are presenting to the world '*something*' that '*can*' be attacked. Furthermore '*ego*' will always keep you in a state of anxiety, even at a very subtle level that you may not even notice.

Higher levels of attainment require a relaxed and sponta-

neous movement of mind, body, energy and spirit. A mind full of self concern, is restricted in many ways.

As we are considering the Martial Aspect here, then after 'form' the next thing to consider is 'power'. In other words the mastery of Fa-jing. Why? Because Fa-jing is itself an awesome and devastating technique. Without the mastery of Fa-jing all 'internal' arts are not only incomplete, they are not even a fighting system. So here is the 'short' term strategy of our training. Find an instructor and learn this most essential of techniques. Also keep in mind that not all instructors can express this 'internal' power - and others are only half-way there themselves.

We have found in our classes that three criterion must be met regarding Fa-jing ... It must be heard, it must be felt, it must be seen.

It must be heard: Strikes on a focus milt produces a sound, of course - very simple. The sound of a Fa-jing strike however has a certain quality - depending on the shape of the hand - open palm, frog palm, tiger paw etc.

We should train ourselves to recognize this 'sound' and reproduce it time and time

again. It must be felt: Probably the easiest to understand and get in 'tune' with. A correctly executed Fa-jing strike will send a shock wave from the focus milt into the body via the hand/arm. Once again we should aim to be able to reproduce this effect repeatedly.

It must be seen: Here, this is a skill that should really be developed by instructors. By continual observation we come to appreciate the subtleties of movement. Stance, flow, explosive power, and this comes down to small adjustments, and refinement. Through simple observation and experience we can learn to squeeze the maximum available from ourselves and others.

I'm asked many times as to what Fa-jing is. This is of course extremely difficult to describe. Of course we can say it's an explosion of concentrated energy, but the only way to give an idea of its effect is maybe to compare it with ordinary household fireworks (strange as it seems).

For example, if we compare a rocket to an external punch, and if that rocket is heading your way, with training you may be able to block it, 'ward' it off, or even grab it. But if someone throws a "banger" (internal

punch) what can you do? It just blows up in your face. Fa-jing is the "unstoppable technique". I was once overheard discussing Fa-jing with a student by a high degree Black Belt Aikido instructor who assured me that he could lead the Ki/chi of my punch around his body and follow it up with a disabling technique to myself.

When I told him that Fa-jing striking is unlike other punching methods he continued to challenge me to strike him. Well to cut a long story short, he simply could not react quickly enough. I even got to the stage of counting myself in slowly one-two-three strike. To be honest his only reaction was to blink, as my fist was in his face before he could react.

When I told him that Fa-jing striking is unlike other punching methods he continued to challenge me to strike him.

Having owned a Martial Art shop for five years I had many an opportunity to 'compare notes' and train (in the back of the shop when it was quiet) with instructors from all the major arts. This in itself gave me a good insight. I also came to realize

that the word 'internal' has become very fashionable. Over a period of time I had two Wing Chun instructors and a third degree Black Belt, Tae Kwon Do (believe it or not) claiming that they taught their respective Martial Arts 'internally'. After five minutes with the focus mitts they changed their minds. It turned out that they were simply practising in a more 'relaxed' manner. So there is a great deal of misunderstanding and ignorance about 'internal' methods.

Finally the third part of our fighting approach to Taiji ... 'Din Mak'. This is of course a long term strategy. One being on the face of this Earth is going to master all the complexities of the points, directions, effects, recovery etc. in a short time. SO simply start with a good acupressure/acupuncture book. Start slowly by teaching yourself the main meridians and their functions and related organs. Set a goal of learning the location of one point a week and build up your knowledge slowly. Dim Mak is both effective and sophisticated and used in conjunction with Fa-jing is devastating.

I was recently asked by a Tibetan Lama what I thought was wrong with the way Dzogchen was being pre-

sented in the West? (Dzogchen or Great Completion sometimes called Great Perfection Teachings is recognized has the highest and most sophisticated of the enlightened systems of Tibetan Buddhism and the Bön Tradition which has become very "fashionable" in the West). I replied, I did not know. His reply was very simple, "It's not being taught step by step". He continued, "If the teachings are presented correctly and in sequence, you will get there. It makes no difference whether you're a Tibetan or a Westerner."

Sometimes it is this 'step by step' approach that we cannot handle ... we are in a rush. Maybe we want the status of an instructor or a teacher, or even to 'talk' a great deal about our knowledge. All this takes us away from being true students of the 'Way'. At some stage we must begin to integrate our practice into daily life - to refine it. So then are *whole* practice is reflected in our compassion, conduct, our speech, our work, diet and so on. The dissolving of our limited, and brittle self importance must come about. For otherwise our practice will resemble a train covering more and more ground but remaining on the track. Refining our practice (which

requires less and less accruing of status, reputation and image) teaches us to fly ... first class in Concorde.

At some stage the integrating of our training and our life will present itself. Sometimes dramatically, sometimes not. It will be here that our practice can enter a new dimension. We can then choose our path. The hardest thing to do, of course, is to recognise it when it comes.

Tony can be contacted at :

Green Dragon/White Tiger Trading,

PO Box 409, Swansea SA1 4ZA

Wales, UK

Fax/24 hour Answerphone:
01792 427888

E-mail:

Tony@greendragonwhitetiger.com

Website:

www.greendragonwhitetiger.com

Tony is a senior UK instructor with the W.T.B.A.

Green Dragon, White Tiger sell all of Erle Montague's videos and books in the UK.

WTBA NEWS

The WTBA now has an E-mail address of its own. WTBA@better.net.au

Mause and Rob Eaglen will be manning and womaning this E-mail address for WTBA merchandise orders, camp and class information etc.

We also have our own 'domain' on the Web. Our new site address is: www.taichiworld.com where I now have a huge space onto which to place many more articles etc. Taichi World will be the most sought after site for the Internal Martial arts, well, our current site is already! Our E-mail address will remain the same, however, we also have taiji@moontagu.com.

You will also notice that MTG163 is now available to everyone as it has now been documented.

And finally a sad note. One of our nicest members, Albert Watson died in 1998. Albert was dedicated and one of the most eager Tai Chi practitioners that I have had the pleasure to teach. I will miss his letters full of wisdom that could only have come from someone of his age and life experience.

Mobility vs Stability

by Michael Babin

One of the subjects of controversy that often comes up whenever Taiji practitioners gather either live or on the Internet is the relative merits of being rooted or grounded versus the ability to attack and defend. While both skills are essential to do Taiji as a combative method; many modern practitioners have chosen to emphasize the former. I don't know where this obsession with being immovable comes from in Taiji as it doesn't appear in the other mainstream internal arts of pa-kua, hsing-i and Liu He Ba Fa even though all of these place great importance on stability of stance and connection to the ground.

Perhaps most modern Taiji schools that still practice interactive training methods concentrate on rooting and yielding as these are relatively safe to practice

Perhaps most modern Taiji schools that still practice interactive training methods concentrate on rooting and yielding as these are relatively safe to practice and because that is what Yang Ch'eng-fu

and those who taught after him have emphasized. Since Ch'eng-fu was over six foot and very heavy in weight, it's not surprising that he was able to make such methods work extremely well. As to how soft even Ch'eng-fu was, there are certainly stories that would indicate that his yielding was anything but gentle. One of his more famous students, Cheng Man-ching, reported in a book that the two times he actually got to touch arms with his teacher he was knocked down and injured immediately both times!

The other approach in the Taiji martial tradition is much less common as its exponents Yang Shao-hou and his infamous uncle Yang Ban-hou (much smaller men than Ch'eng-fu) didn't have many senior students to pass on their tradition. Both men emphasized mobility and striking combined with effective yielding. In case you haven't seen it, let me quote from the book *YANG STYLE TAIJQUAN* which was published in 1988 on the Chinese Mainland and is the official Mainland government "bible" of the modern Yang-style. In the preface, written by the late Gu Liuxin (who was greatly respected as a Taiji practitioner and historian); he writes of Yang Shao-hou (Cheng-fu's brother):

"He was swift and powerful in delivering his blows and, with eyes blazing like torches, a grim smile on his face and roaring and howling as he darted back and forth, he was held in awe by others. The technical features of this kind of Taiji: were overcoming strong attacks with soft movements, adapting oneself to other's movements and following up with quick attacks, using the motion of sudden connection to defeat the opponent with surprise attacks, The hand movements included catching, pushing and capturing, injuring the attacker's muscles and harming his bones, attacking the opponent's vital points and controlling his arteries and veins, using "continuous" and "sudden connection" force to throw the attacker to the ground with lightning speed."

It goes on but you get the idea. I have always liked that passage as it always makes me think of our Australian friend and role-model. Yang Shao-hou might not recognize all the details of Erle's Taiji; but I'm sure he would approve of its spirit and internal power.

It seems to me that while being "rooted" or "grounded" or "heavy" is certainly an essential aspect of creating and maintaining balance in Taiji terms; it is also possible to get

obsessed with this aspect to the detriment of its martial value. As far as I have been able to see over the years, it is very difficult to convince the fanatical adherents of "holding their ground" while twisting at impossible angles that it might not be the best possible tactic if your opponent is skillful and willing to strike as opposed to just trying to push or manipulate you stiffly off-balance.

even though he ignored how often I touched him on the floating ribs and throat.

Last year a young fellow come to one of my push-hands class and went out of his way to challenge and embarrass me. He was a big fellow and had some very real skill in modern "rubbery" push-hands and kept pushing me hither-and-yon while criticizing my approach to push-hands — even though he ignored how often I touched him on the floating ribs and throat.

What I call "rubbery" push-hands is the fixed-step, free-style method that they do in competition in North America, at least. While the rules vary somewhat from event to event; in general terms, no foot movement,

grabbing or striking is allowed and the goal is to make your opponent lose their balance and/or push him or her out of a specified area on the floor. Those who get good at this sport often lean at impossible angles and/or use very low stances to try and get an advantage. Such manoeuver work best when you don't have to worry about creating a safe connection with the other person and when no striking is allowed.

After about 10 minutes of doing this style of push-hands with him; he hurled me into a wall. As I was starting to lose my temper, I told him to leave my studio which he did although not without further verbal abuse! Not a pleasant experience for myself or for those of my students who witnessed it. With hindsight the only thing that made me feel a little bit better was that it wasn't as difficult as it would have been a few years ago to keep from striking him just to show him that being immobile and able to push isn't the only way to approach push-hands.

However, my biggest mistake was ignoring advice that I have given others and that Erle has said best — and often: "Don't play the other person's game". I don't train to be immobile and to push; so it's more than a little foolish to do

just that with someone larger than me who only trains to develop such skills. In terms of push-hands, it really is quite difficult to play by someone else's rules and come out smiling.

Similarly, it is very hard to ethically demonstrate internal martial skills unless someone really attacks you. Otherwise, it tends to turn into the kind of nonsense that characterizes little boys playing soldiers ("Bang, you're dead!" "No, I'm not!" "Yes, you are!") It can take years before you develop the ability to hurt them just enough to show them that you are doing something unique. Legal and ethical issues aside, you wouldn't want the kind of students who are studying with you only because you were able to overpower them.

As to rooting, it is essential — but it should be a mobile stability in case your partner decides to "pop" you one as soon as he feels that kind of resistance/stability when he pushes. Static defenses only work in ideal conditions (i.e., a co-operative partner); the Great Wall of China, the French Maginot Line in WW2 and the Roman Hadrian's Wall in England are all fine examples of why static defence fails if the opponent is determined, much less skillful!

Practice Makes Perfect

Marc Seguin: (Canada)

Taiji is not something you "buy off the rack" and does not come in "one size fits all". It is a lifetime of dedication, of commitment, of willingness to transform yourself in every way in order to reach the "Ultimate". It is what you do, what you feel, how you cope with conflicts, how you interact with your family, friends and neighbours, not to mention your spiritual inspirations.

Many people don't practice Taiji, they just show up to class and "do their time".

What I find so amazing about Taiji, is that it is slightly different for everyone. We all take a shot at it from a different angle, and Taiji being what it is, responds accordingly. This is a basic principle and never changes. What we expect is not always necessarily what we get.

Many people don't practice Taiji, they just show up to class

and "do their time". They think or expect after a few months to have a good foundation of the system. Well, I can assure you that after a couple years of regular training, you are still at very rudimentary level. As an example, timing, coordination and perception are skills that require tremendous amount of training on your part and usually cannot be taught to you by the best of instructors. It is similar to learning to ride a bicycle; we can only show you and hold you to a point, the rest is entirely up to you. You are the one developing timing, coordination and perception. It is you, your feelings and intuition. All of your Taiji studies fall along those lines. The instructor is only a guide that can help you along the way.

Your progress depends on what you understand and can apply. Progress is not about how much you learn! We have all heard the famous words "More is Less", "Less is More". It is a known fact that people who learn too much too fast do not absorb concepts well. This usually reflects in a very poor foundation. If you are to build something solid that will last a lifetime — invest the time!

In my opinion, the most important breakthroughs we

make, on the martial side at least, have nothing to do with impressive forms or flamboyant techniques, but rather with the discovery and understanding of the principles and concepts. The application of such discoveries is what makes any technique work in any given instance. I do agree that forms and techniques must be learned and require many years to master. The intricate level of understanding concepts and principles may also take you as many years and possibly a lifetime of dedication.

It's not surprising to see the amount of people that start Taiji and quit shortly after.

It's not surprising to see the amount of people that start Taiji and quit shortly after. You see, as a student, great challenges lie ahead. To set in motion your learning mechanism, get the attitude and motivation. Go to class with an open mind, no prejudices, no limitations, no expectations, just a desire to learn.

Everybody loves secrets. I'll share a few with you.

- a) Practice, Practice, Practice - don't kid yourself; how much time do you really practice?
- b) The suggestions and corrections you receive from your instructor - Remember them and Do them. Be sure you know what he or she really means.
- c) Look at yourself - truly look at yourself from every angle. Feel and sense.

Many times throughout life, you reach certain plateaus and you think you are not advancing / progressing. Our "learning curve" is not always on the way up, sometimes it flattens out or seems like it drops. In my experience, the contributing factors are many and they vary from "not being ready to receive" to "ego problems". It may sound a bit harsh, but Trust me, Check it out!

Marc is a WTBA Instructor in Canada and a student with Mike Babin.

Sudden Violence, The Erle Montaigue System

I am beginning a new video series called "Sudden Violence, The Erle Montaigue System".

The tapes will cover only street fighting methods using fa-jing and Taijiquan.

Still at this late time almost into 2000, most Taijiquan practitioners do not know that Taiji has anything at all to do with being a martial art, let alone a self-defense system of the highest level.

This video series hopefully will go some more way to educating those people.

Taijiquan has all the street fighting methods any will ever need, it is pure sudden violence. And like it or not, that's what has to be in order to survive street attacks. We can train until the goats come home in the dojo doing form and push hands, the way most teach it, and we will still have nothing of the martial value and as such also nothing of the healing value. You see, you cannot separate the healing from the martial where Taiji is concerned. You learn the martial to learn the healing and you learn the healing to learn the martial. It's so simple. So why doesn't anyone know?